CLAIMS

1. A split grip control lever comprising:

a fixed base portion; and

a movable upper portion that is separately pivotable relative to the fixed base portion, wherein the movable upper portion and the fixed base portion define a substantially continuous profile.

2. A split grip control lever according to claim 1, further comprising a control device positioned within the fixed base portion, wherein the movable upper portion comprises a control shaft coupled with the control device.

3. A split grip control lever according to claim 2, wherein the control device is disposed at a substantially central position relative to the lever profile such that a pivot point of the control shaft is centrally disposed relative to the lever profile.

4. A split grip control lever according to claim 2, wherein the fixed base portion is fixedly securable to a surface, and wherein the control device is disposed at a position spaced from the surface at a substantially central position relative to the lever profile.

5. A split grip control lever according to claim 2, wherein the control device is an electromechanical control device.

6. A split grip control lever according to claim 2, wherein the control device is an optical control device.

7. A split grip control lever according to claim 1, wherein the substantially continuous profile is shaped to fit a operator's hand.

8. A split grip control lever according to claim 7, wherein the substantially continuous profile is shaped to fit one of a operator's right hand or left hand.

9. A split grip control lever according to claim 1, wherein the movable upper portion is disposed relative to the fixed base portion and sized for manipulation by a operator's thumb and index finger, and wherein the fixed base portion is disposed relative to the movable upper portion and sized to support the operator's hand.

10. A control lever for machinery comprising:

a fixed based portion fixedly securable to a surface of the machinery; and

a control portion disposed adjacent the fixed base portion and movable relative to the fixed base portion, the control portion being separated from the fixed base portion via a split line and being contiguous with the fixed base portion to define a substantially continuous profile.

11. A control lever according to claim 10, further comprising a control device positioned within the fixed base portion, wherein the control portion comprises a control shaft coupled with the control device.

12. A control lever according to claim 11, wherein the control device is disposed at a substantially central position relative to the lever profile such that a pivot point of the control shaft is centrally disposed relative to the lever profile.

13. A control lever according to claim 11, wherein the fixed base portion is fixedly securable to a surface, and wherein the control device is disposed at a position spaced from the surface at a substantially central position relative to the lever profile.

14. A machine comprising:

a machine frame supporting at least one movable element; and

a control lever secured to the machine frame, the control lever comprising:

a fixed base portion fixedly secured to the machine frame, and

a movable upper portion that is separately pivotable relative to the fixed base portion for controlling movement of the at least one movable element, wherein the

movable upper portion and the fixed base portion define a substantially continuous profile.

15. A machine according to claim 14, wherein the control lever further comprises a control device positioned within the fixed base portion, and wherein the movable upper portion comprises a control shaft coupled with the control device.

16. A machine according to claim 15, wherein the control device is disposed at a substantially central position relative to the lever profile such that a pivot point of the control shaft is centrally disposed relative to the lever profile.

17. A machine according to claim 15, wherein the control device is disposed at a position spaced from the machine frame at a substantially central position relative to the lever profile.